



Conz Street CHRONICLE

Sleep - it should be a good thing

By **SUSAN ADELSON**
Chronicle volunteer

The saying, “If you snooze, you lose,” turns out to be true. According to Rebecca Spencer, associate professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, snoozing and napping are not the same. The former is detrimental to the health of older adults, while the latter, if done consistently and correctly, is innocuous. Spencer gave the closing keynote speech at UMass’s November conference on Active Aging in the Valley. Her address was titled “The Power of Sleep for Healthy Aging.”

Snoozing is what happens when a

person falls asleep unintentionally while watching TV, reading, riding in a car, or even conversing. This accidental sleep interferes with the good sleep people should get at nighttime when they go to bed. Napping, when part of a daily routine, is when a person lies down in bed at the same time each day and sleeps for the same length of time. If naps are no longer than an hour, they most likely will not interfere with a healthy night’s sleep. Spencer explains that it’s important older adults get what she calls “good sleep,” as it aids three critical aspects of overall health: cognition, neurological or brain health, and physical health. Cognition relates to a person’s

memory and decision making. Neurological health involves the cleansing of waste products from the brain and prevents degeneration of brain cells, thus leaving the brain healthy and more able to stave off neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. The more sleep one gets, the more cleansing is done. Physical health promoted by good sleep creates a healthy immune system and protects against catching cold or flu germs. Getting a good night’s sleep improves people’s health and also works as a preventative measure so that people can stay healthy. What is a good night’s sleep?

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DENNIS LEE PHOTO
Rebecca Spencer is an associate professor of psychological and brain sciences at UMass.

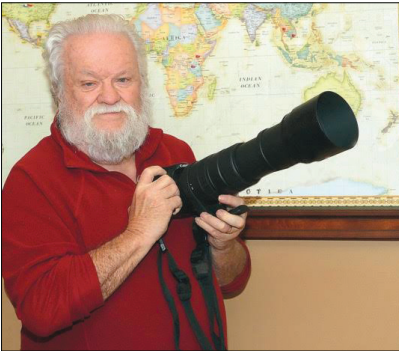


JIM SPENCER PHOTO
A garden at the Prince’s Palace, Monaco



JIM SPENCER PHOTO
The Pont d’Avignon, France

Artist of the month: Jim Spencer



DENNIS LEE PHOTO

By **SUZANNE WILSON**
Chronicle volunteer

“Let’s call it ‘Jim Sees the World,’” Jim Spencer said in his informal, to-the-point way when asked to describe his new exhibit at the Senior Center. Spencer, who teaches photography and writing classes at the Center, said the exhibit will showcase photos he’s taken during his travels abroad. Wherever he goes, he gets his best pictures by focusing his Canon 70D on the detail that catches his eye. “I don’t photograph the whole cathedral,” he said. “I’ll take the one gargoyles that attracts me.”

Spencer got into photography in the Air Force, where he worked as an imagery analyst and photographer from 1965 to 1986. These days, he finds that what he enjoys most is passing his picture-taking skills on to others. “I like to help the 70-year-old who comes in and says, ‘How do I use this camera?’ And then two years later, that same person is an accomplished amateur photographer who’s won an award. To me, that’s exciting.”

An opening reception for this exhibit takes place from noon to 2 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 20.

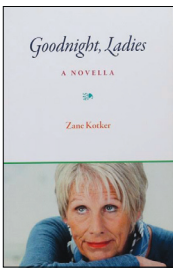
Author of the month: Zane Kotker

By **SUZANNE WILSON**
Chronicle volunteer

At a reading for her new book, “Goodnight, Ladies,” author Zane Kotker was approached by a woman who whispered in her ear. “Pru is my favorite.” At another book event, a reader told Kotker, “I have the same thoughts as Nikki.” And at a third gathering, a woman confided, “I’m most like Nikki, but I really would like to be Chessa.”

Pru. Nikki. Chessa.

The three women - all widows in their 70s who live alone - are fictional characters who



seem to live and breathe, thanks to Kotker’s clear-eyed observations, smart humor, and close-to-the-bone prose. It’s a book about aging, loss, solitude and change that speaks to readers, but never lectures. We meet Pru as she ponders downsizing to a small condo in a retirement community that, as Pru puts it, has “just got Last Stop written all over it.” We are introduced to Chessa, who has brought a shelter dog home to her now-

empty house. Upstairs, looking at lights across the way, “she knew there were couples over there, sitting out on their patio extensions, drinks in hand, imagining their futures together. Well, she was having her future with a dog.” And there is Nikki, now retired from her job at a local library’s First Call desk, who is thinking about time. “Every minute must count. Every minute must be golden. Ten years left? Fifteen? So few! ... I want. I want. More time? Not exactly. I want this

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DENNIS LEE PHOTO
Zane Kotker is this month’s author.

Author of the month: Zane Kotker

Sleep

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time well spent. But how?”

“Goodnight, Ladies” is a 111-page novella - a work of fiction that’s longer than a short story and shorter than a novel - that builds on several of Kotker’s previously published stories.

“The response has been very good,” she said, as she talked one recent morning in the study of her Northampton home.

Although she didn’t set out to write a book for aging baby boomers, Kotker said readers in that age group seem to connect strongly with it. She has found that among them, women and men tend to react in different ways.

“Men have told me they love it,” she said, “though some say it’s sad. I have not heard any women say that. I don’t think many men imagine themselves living alone, so that part of it feels sad and lonely to them.”

Women also feel sad about living alone, she said, “but then they adjust. So I think they just identify with it, they expect it for themselves.”

As she neared 70, Kotker began jotting down her thoughts and observations about daily life on little slips of paper.

She took note of snippets of conversations, such as friends’

comments about online dating, or downsizing. Over time, those slips of paper, those bits and pieces of conversations, and her earlier short stories grew into “Goodnight, Ladies.”

In the months since it was published in September by Off the Common Books of Amherst, the novella has earned high praise.

“I loved these Ladies,” wrote author Elinor Lipman, “and I thanked every chapter of this novella for its intelligence, its dry wit, its dilemmas and victories, and for beautiful sentences that shine without preening. Truly, a pleasure.”

The novella takes its place alongside Kotker’s five novels, numerous short stories, and a collection of poetry. She has also written non-fiction.

“Fiction is fun, and non-fiction is work,” she said, when asked which she prefers.

With fiction, she said, “you’re calling on everything you ever knew and on whatever pops into your head. You don’t know exactly where it will take you.” Non-fiction, on the other hand, “has to be correct, it has to be true. You write what you know, plus all the stuff you find out doing your research.”

Everything she writes invariably goes through multiple drafts -

sometimes dozens - as she edits, rewrites and revises. “I write quickly, but then I throw out a lot of it,” she said.

Kotker used to share those many drafts with her husband, Norman Kotker, a writer who died in 1999. Their working relationship began as what she calls “the old model. He wrote the book and I typed it.”

After she started writing, the two of them developed their own shorthand for marking up each other’s drafts: B was for bored; C for confused; L for laughter; T for tears; and an exclamation point was praise for a great insight.

“He was a very good reader and a wonderful editor,” she said.

Her focus these days is less on building a career than it used to be, but it’s still all about the writing.

“I’m interested in getting things into their best shape and sending them out,” she said. “My husband used to say that writing a book is like making a shoe.” They are equal arts, both requiring craftsmanship and attention to detail. “You want to make a good shoe, the best shoe you can. That’s what matters the most.”

Zane Kotker will read from “Goodnight, Ladies” at the Senior Center, Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 1:30 p.m. A reception will follow.

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Reserving the body’s natural melatonin for nighttime sleep, keeping the bedroom cool and dark, and being consistent about the amount of sleep one gets each night all contribute to good sleep.

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone that builds up with light and is secreted in the dark. It induces sleepiness, which is why it should be saved for bedtime.

Older adults should make it a point to go outside, put up the shades, and sit by windows.

Aging adults do not need as much sleep as they once did. The rule of thumb, according to Spencer, is to subtract an hour from the number of hours slept in early or middle adulthood, and then try to get that amount of sleep each night. She added that it’s important not to stress over the exact number of hours, as that is likely to cause sleeplessness.

Unlike recommendations for children and young adults, watching TV or using a computer or cellphone before bed is of little consequence. Most older adults don’t have a problem falling asleep; the problem is staying asleep or falling back asleep after awakening during the night. It is helpful to avoid caffeine and limit liquid intake before bed.

Rather than taking prescription drugs or over-the-counter sleep aids, Spencer recommends a number of techniques for falling asleep. Meditation, mindfulness, or progressive muscle relaxation are practices which promote good sleep.

Picturing an image or even using an app that provides a redundant stimulus such as a pulsating circle can be helpful. And, according to Spencer, there’s also the old standby of counting sheep.

The Chronicle: Who we are

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The Conz Street Chronicle is a bi-monthly publication of Northampton Senior Services. The newspaper is delivered to more than 4,000 households every other month.

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The Conz Street Chronicle staff is made up of several Senior Center volunteers, and also receives invaluable assistance from many others. Contributors include staff from Senior Services and from other city departments and organizations.

All work is published at the editor’s discretion.

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Chronicle volunteer staff includes:

Editor: Lou Groccia; writers/copy editors: Susan Adelson, Suzanne Wilson; photographer/writer Jim Spencer; photographer Dennis Lee.

How can I receive the Chronicle?

If you are interested in receiving The Conz Street Chronicle, either by mail or email please contact the Senior Center at 587-1227.

The publication is mailed at no cost to residents of Northampton, Florence and Leed, ages 60 and older, six times a year.

The Chronicle also appears six times a year in the Daily Hampshire Gazette.

The publication is mailed to residents, ages 55-59, and non-residents for a fee. A postal subscription is \$18 per year.

An email subscription is \$6 per year.

If you are interested in subscribing you can pay in person at the Senior Center or mail a check to:

Northampton Senior Services & Senior Center
67 Conz St.
Northampton, MA 01060
Attn: Conz Street Chronicle
Make checks payable to: NSS
We look forward to continue providing this publication to you with your support.

NCOA & Senior Center mission statement

Northampton Senior Services is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the city’s elders, ages 60 and over, with some programs and activities available to those 55-59 years of age. Every elder is a valued member of the community and has the right to a life of dignity while maintaining a maximum level of independence.

To meet this goal, Northampton Senior Services identifies needs and provides a range of programs, activities and services to address those needs.

Northampton Senior Services serves as a community focal point around issues of aging and is a liaison to local, state and federal resources for elders and their families.

Senior Services general information

Northampton Senior Services & Senior Center
67 Conz St.,
Northampton, MA 01060

Telephone: (413) 587-1228

www.northamptonma.gov/713/Senior-Services

Hours: Monday-Friday
8:15 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Wednesday
7 - 8:30 p.m.

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NORTHAMPTON SENIOR CENTER

67 Conz St., Northampton, MA 01060 | 413-587-1228



December 2016 Calendar of Programs and Events

Ongoing Programs

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:20 Dynamic Fitness DVD	8:45 Strength & Stretch	8:20 Dynamic Fitness DVD	8:45 Strength & Stretch	8:20 Dynamic Fitness DVD
9:30 Low Impact 1	9:30 Cup of Conversation	9:30 Low Impact 1	9:00 Benefits Counseling Appointments*	9:30 Low Impact 1
10:00 Creative Writing	10:00 Walking Group	9:30 Digital Photography*	10:00 Walking Group	10:30 Low Impact 2
10:30 Low Impact 2	10:00 Caregiver Support Group*	10:30 Low Impact 2	10:00 Stretch & Tone	12:00 Duplicate Bridge
11:00 Computer Tutor	10:00 Stretch & Tone	11:30 Beginner Tap	10:00 Wisdom Project	12:30 Visit from Dewey the Therapy Dog
1:00 Needle Workshop	11:00 Line Dancing with Joan	12:30 Cribbage	10:00 Knitting Drop In	1:00 Gentle Chair Yoga
1:30 Learn to Meditate	12:00 Duplicate Bridge	1:00 Scrabble	11:30 Third Year Tap	1:00 Senior Gay Men’s Drop-In Group
2:00 Coloring for Adults	1:00 Pitch	1:00 Timeless Tunes	12:00 Contract Bridge	2:45 Yoga
2:45 Free Tai Chi	12:30 Sewing Workshop*	1:00 Zumba Gold	12:30 Second Year Tap	2:45 Free Tai Chi
	2:45 Tuesday Tea	2:45 Feldenkrais	1:00 Mahjongg	
		2:45 Free Tai Chi	1:30 Intermediate Tap	
		7:30 Group Sing- <i>December 7 ONLY</i>	1:30 BINGO	
			2:45 Tai Chi	

** Please register before the first class. Programs requiring pre-registration are marked with an asterisk symbol.
Please note that programs requiring pre-registration may be canceled if minimum numbers are not met.*

Upcoming events and activities

Friday, Dec. 2
1:30 p.m.: Photo Club Monthly Meeting
Dec. 2 and 16
10:30 a.m.: Nutritional Outreach
Tuesday, Dec. 6
10 a.m.: PVTA Photo ID
Blood Pressure Clinic
1:30 pm.: Author of the Month Zane Kotker , “Goodnight, Ladies”
Wednesday, Dec. 7
9:15 a.m.: Veterans benefits services. By appointment only.
10-11:30 a.m.: Low Vision. Pre-registration required.
10-11:30 a.m.: Home Safety Program. Free event. Raffle prizes. Lunch provided. No pre-registration required.
7 p.m.: Group Sing. For singers and non-singers alike.
Thursday, Dec. 8
10 a.m.: Brown Bag
1 pm.: Readers & Thinkers

1:30 p.m. : NCOA Board Meeting
Friday, Dec. 9
Haircuts with Smith Vocational Students & Kendra. By appointment.
5 p.m.: Downtown Northampton Association Holiday Stroll, featuring food and drink, music, hayrides, face painting, a photo booth, holiday lights and more.
Sunday, Dec. 11
1:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.: Annual Holiday Dinner
Wednesday, Dec. 14
8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.: Commonwealth Care Alliance, Senior Care Options Informational Day.
A representative from Commonwealth Care Alliance will be at the senior center to answer questions and provide information about the Commonwealth Care Alliance SCO program.

Friday, Dec. 16
10:30 a.m.: Nutritional Outreach
Monday, Dec. 19
1:30 p.m.: Monday Movie: “Miracle on 34th Street”
Tuesday, Dec. 20
Noon to 2 p.m.: Artist of the Month Reception: Jim Spencer’s Photography
4 p.m.: Disability Commission Meeting
Wednesday, Dec. 21
Foot Clinic, by appointment only.
7 p.m.: Mystery Book Club Monthly Meeting: “Death in Brittany” by Jean-Luc Bannalec
Tuesdays
10 a.m.: Caregiver Support Group. Pre-registration required. Call 455-1936 X104.
1 p.m.: Interfaith Help. Through May.
SHINE
By appointment only. Call 587-1228.



Northampton Senior Services will be closed Friday, Dec. 23 and Monday, Dec. 26. The staff of Northampton Senior Services wishes everyone a happy holiday season.

FYI

Editor’s note: Submissions for this monthly listings of special events and information relevant to seniors can be emailed to: svol@northamptonma.gov

Commonwealth Care Alliance offers meetings

A representative from Commonwealth Care Alliance will be at the Senior Center on Wednesday, Dec. 14, to offer an information session about Senior Care Options. The session will be held in the lobby from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Alliance representative will provide information about plans, answer questions and help with the application process.

Commonwealth Care Alliance, Senior Care Options serves seniors who:

- Are ages 65 or older
- Have Medicare and MassHealth Standard or MassHealth Standard alone



The Klezmir band

Klezmir trio to give free klezmer music concert

Amy Rose, Jim Armenti and Downtown Joe Blumenthal - three members of Klezmir, New England’s dynamic, roots rockin,’ klezmer band - will offer a free concert Monday, Dec. 12, at 2 p.m. at the Senior Center.

Klezmir offers traditional klezmer infused with a wide range of other styles., including country, rock, R&B, classical, folk and bluegrass. The trio plays clarinet, guitar, mandolin, flute, piano, nose flute and bass.

For more information, contact Amy Rose: 253-3831; amyrosemusician@gmail.com; www.klezmir.com.

This event is supported by a grant from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation.

Conversations about care for LGBTQ community

Join in a conversation with local health care practitioners and community members about how to better serve the LGBTQ community.

There will be a meeting from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 6, at the Senior Center.

This event is free. If possible, please RSVP online at www.vmgma.com/rsvp.

Healthy Bones & Balance exercise program on tap

RSVP’s Healthy Bones & Balance osteoporosis exercise program invites fitness-minded boomers and seniors, age 55 +, to participate in their award-winning strength and balance class. Northampton Senior Services will begin hosting classes in 2017. For more information or to be added to the interest list call 587-1228.

Applications open for Tax Work Off program

Applications are now being accepted for the 2017 Tax Work Off Program, which begins on Jan. 1.

Applicants who are accepted for the program work 91 hours between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31 for a participating city department. In exchange for their work, they are entitled to a reduction of \$1,000 in their 2017 City of Northampton taxes.

The Senior Citizen Tax Work Off Program is open to seniors (age 60 and older) who own property in, and pay real estate taxes to, the city. The applicant’s name must appear on the property deed.

The person applying must be income eligible based on the Massachusetts Median Income Guidelines. For example: A household size of one with a maximum income of \$44,168 is eligible to apply. Veterans do not have to be income eligible.

There are 30 positions available for 2017.

For more information, call Linda Desmond at 587-1231 at the Senior Center.

Federal funding available for home repairs

The City of Northampton has funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, through its Community Development Block Grant Program, to assist qualified owner-occupants in making necessary home repairs. The funding can be used to address building code violations, eliminate unsafe or unhealthy conditions, undertake accessibility modifications, improve weatherization, or undertake other repairs to improve living conditions.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will assist the city in implementing the Housing Rehabilitation Program.

Contact PVPC Housing Coordinator Shirley Stephens at (413) 781-6045 for a pre-application form. Assistance will be on a “first come, first serve” basis to qualified applicants.

Help wanted: Medical transportation drivers

The Senior Center is looking for volunteer drivers to join the ranks of its medical transportation team. Drivers can make their own hours, and drive as little or as much as they would like. All drivers use their own vehicles, and must have a safe driving record, and up-to-date auto insurance,

The Center offers driver reimbursement at the rate of 52 cents per mile - and the opportunity to meet some lovely people along the way.

Anyone interested in this volunteer position should contact Jennifer Carbery at 587-1301.

Home Safety Program

Wednesday, December 7th 11:00am-12:30pm
Northampton Senior Center—67 Conz Street, Northampton





FIRE SAFETY
MEDICATION SAFETY
HOME SECURITY
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

RAFFLE PRIZESLUNCH PROVIDED***

This is a FREE event and everyone is welcome!

Sponsored By: Hampshire Regional Emergency Response Team/Medical Reserve Corps, Hampshire HOPE, Northampton Fire Rescue Department, Northampton Police Department, and Northampton Health Department

Medicare open enrollment period goes through Dec. 7

The Medicare Open Enrollment Period is an annual period of time (Oct. 15 through Dec. 7) when current Medicare users can choose to re-evaluate part of their Medicare coverage (their Medicare Advantage and/or Part D plan) and compare it against all other plans on the market.

After re-evaluating, if you find a plan that is a better fit for your needs, you can then switch to, drop or add a Medicare Advantage or Part D plan. Medicare Advantage is also known as a Part C plan.

You cannot use Open Enrollment to enroll in Part A and/or Part B for the first time.

Here’s what you can do during the Open Enrollment Period:

Anyone who has (or is signing up for) Medicare Parts A or B can join or drop a Part D prescription drug plan.

Anyone with Original Medicare (Parts A & B) can switch to a Medicare Advantage plan.

Anyone with Medicare Advantage can drop it and switch back to just Original Medicare (Parts A & B).

Anyone with Medicare Advantage can switch to a new Medicare Advantage plan.

Anyone with a Part D prescription drug plan can switch to a new Part D prescription drug plan.

If you use the Open Enrollment period to choose a new Medicare Advantage or Part D plan, that new coverage will begin on Jan. 1.

Why should I consider re-evaluating my current Medicare coverage during Open Enrollment?

Unfortunately, choosing health insurance is no longer a one-time decision for most Medicare beneficiaries. Each year, insurance companies can make changes to Medicare plans that can impact how much you pay out-of-pocket—like the monthly premiums, deductibles, drug costs, and provider or pharmacy “networks.” A network is a list of doctors, hospitals, or pharmacies that negotiate prices with insurance companies. They can also make changes to your plan’s “formulary” (list of covered drugs). Given these yearly changes, it is a good idea to re-evaluate your current Medicare plan each year to make sure it still meets your needs. Below are some additional

benefits of re-evaluating your coverage during Open Enrollment:

You can switch to better prescription drug coverage. Using Open Enrollment to switch your drug coverage—or add drug coverage for the first time—can make crucial medications that you need less expensive. It can also ensure that your drug plan still covers the drugs you need (as your prescriptions may not be included on your plan’s formulary for next year).

You can save money and keep your doctor in-network. Switching your Medicare Advantage or Part D plan can potentially save you hundreds of dollars a year—especially if your current plan’s out-of-pocket costs will increase next year. Research shows that the average consumer can save \$300 or more annually if they review their Part D coverage.

One way to lower your medical costs is to check that your current doctors, hospital, and pharmacy are “in-network” with whatever Medicare Advantage or Part D plan you choose.

If your insurance company has changed your plan’s provider or pharmacy network for next year (and your doctor or other resources will no longer be included), you can use Open Enrollment to switch to a plan that will include your current doctors, hospital and/or pharmacy in-network, thereby lowering your medical costs.

You can find a higher quality plan. Finally, check the quality of your plan using the Medicare 5-star ratings system.

Plans with a 5-star rating are considered high quality and those with fewer than 3 stars are considered poor quality. If your current plan is ranked as less than a 3, consider using Open Enrollment to switch to a higher rated plan.

Trips and travel

The Friends Group of Northampton Senior Services recently traveled to the Westchester Theater in New York to see the musical, “Saturday Night Fever.”

One more trip this year takes place on Tuesday, Dec. 13. We will travel to Stockbridge to see the first exhibition of Hanna-Barbera Productions Inc.’s works at the Norman Rockwell Museum.

Titled “Hanna-Barbera: The Architects of Saturday Morning,” the exhibit offers a comprehensive look into the animation team that collaborated for more than 60 years, creating hundreds of memorable characters that became beloved favorites.

The museum will be decorated for the holiday so we’ll have “a gay ol’ time.” Lunch on your own at Michaels Restaurant. The cost is \$56 for this “Yabba Dabba Doo!” trip.

Here is a peek behind the curtain for trips in 2017:

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Tall Ships in Boston (only a few seats remain); Lobster feast; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Patriot Place; and Moon River with Jimmy Osmond, Quechee, Vermont; and the Rockettes in New York City

Join the group to see “Beautiful: The Carole King Musical” at the Bushnell Theatre in Hartford, Conn., on Jan. 21. “Beautiful” tells the story of King’s rise to stardom.

King wrote more than two dozen chart hits for numerous artists.

Prior to the show, we will enjoy lunch at The Chowder Pot in Hartford.

The cost is \$143 (corrected pricing). Sign-up deadline is Jan. 9, 2017.

The following two trips have early sign-up deadlines and require passports.

Starting May 21, we head to quaint Mackinac Island for seven days by bus, with four consecutive days in northern Michigan. \$75 will reserve your seat; full cost is \$595.

Then in August (rescheduled from June) we cruise to Bermuda for eight days aboard the refurbished Celebrity Summit, starting Aug. 20. A fee of \$350 will reserve your cabin; full cost starts at \$1,189 for a double- occupied cabin.

Please take careful note on when reservations must be made. Trips may involve acquiring buses, tickets, meal reservations etc.

Due to payment requirements for the Friends Group, reservations must be made at least 30 days prior to the trip date.

In some cases, for multi-day trips, a deposit will be required prior to the 30 -day trip date deadline.

Trips need a minimum number of participants and will be canceled if enrollment numbers are not met by the deadline.

So, please, sign up EARLY. We will not cash your check until the trip date nears and it will be returned if a cancellation occurs.

For more information, call the Senior Center at 587-1228.